DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 209 609 CG 015 565

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TITLE Follower Attributional Biases and Assessments of Female and Male Leaders' Performance.
SPONS AGENCY Army Research Inst. for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Alexandria, Va.
PUB DATE Aug 81
GRANT MDA-903-78-G02
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (89th, Los Angeles, CA, August 24-26, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; *Attribution Theory; Evaluation Criteria; Higher Education; *Leadership Qualities; Leadership Styles; Military Personnel; *Military Schools; *Sex Bias; *Sex Differences; Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes
IDENTIFIERS *Military Academy (West Point) NY

ABSTRACT

Attitudes toward the role of women in the army do not introduce a consistent and strong bias into the way male and female leaders are judged by their subordinates. Male and female cadets at the U.S. Military Academy completed questionnaires describing their unit leaders at two training activities. Results showed that egalitarian followers and traditional followers did not make different attributional or evaluative judgments regarding male and female leaders. However, in the evaluation of leader success, some patterns suggested gender-based bias. The absence of consistent gender-based bias suggests that the West Point environment is generally healthy with regard to the issue of sexism. (JAC)

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FOLLOWER ATTRIBUTIONAL BIASES AND ASSESSMENTS OF FEMALE AND MALE LEADERS' PERFORMANCE

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*The research reported here was supported by grant MDA 903-78-G02 from the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (Jerome Adams, Principal Investigator).

**This paper represents the views of the authors and not the official position of the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Army Research Institute, the U.S. Army, or any other governmental agency unless so designated by authorized documents.

***We thank the staff of OIR, U.S. Military Academy for their assistance in collecting and coding the date. We also acknowledge the assistance of Michael Frone, Lisa Granton, and Mariput Steigauf in preparing the data for analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The situation: it is the tenth frame, Chuck is the anchor on the bowling team, the opponents have already finished and he needs a mark, strike or spare, in order to win the game and first place. Slowly, methodically Chuck procedes to in his five step delivery. He releases the ball in a wide sweeping arc which carries two boards from the gutter. As the team awaits the familiar hook toward the pocket, the unforgivable takes place. The ball falls into the gutter! Chuck's team loses!! The following discussion takes place. Chuck: I knew that there was too much wax on the lanes. I need a rubber ball not the plastic one, and another thing I knew that the wall on lane one would give left-handed bowlers like me more trouble. Chuck's teammates smile silently, but their inner thoughts are more like: Gee he really ruined our chances for first place. As the team's anchor all he needed was a mark, instead he choked under pressure.

The next situation involves leadership performance counseling.

A cadet female leader who is doing poorly in military development discusses her performance with a tactical officer. Quite often there is a basic difference between the opinions of the two. The cadet, in attempting to understand and explain the inadequate performance, is usually able to point to situational barriers such as too little time, too many work tasks required simultaneously, or inadequate support from followers under the leader's control. The tactical officer may in a display of empathy nod, and may wish to believe, but deep down in one's heart of hearts usually disagrees. The Tactical Officer is convinced that poor performance is not due to situational factors. Rather, the

Tactical Officer believes instead that the failure is due to enduring attributes of the cadet, her sex, to lack of ability, personal ineptitude, lack of proper personal motivation. In both of these instances the actors' perceptions of the causes of their behavior are at variance with those held by outside observers. The actors' view of behavior underscore the importance of situational factors which influence behavior. The observers view emphasize the role of stable personal dispositions within the actors.

There have been several studies which have examined specific cognitive forces impelling actors to attribute their behavior to situations in the environment and observers to attribute the same behavior to personal characteristics of the actors (Jones & Davis 1965; Jones & Nesbitt 1972; Kelley, 1973). Although these studies show that attributions are sensitive to interaction effects between the attributes of the person and his or her environment, the sex-role context of attributions regarding females and males performing the same task has not been adequately explored (Rose, 1978). For example, in masculine sex-typed tasks, similar performances by females and males is perceived to be caused by different factors. Successful male performance is more often attributed to dispositional factors such as skill and ability, and successful female performance is more often attributed to situational factors such as luck & simplicity of task (Deaux & Emswiller 1974, Terborg & Ilgen 1975, Rice, Bender & Vitters, 1980). Other research, (Feldman-Summers & Kiesler 1974; Feather & Simon, 1975), reports that the sex-type of the task affects attributions but not in a consistent manner. For example the cause of female success is not always attributed to external attributions such as luck. They found that internal motivation and to a lesser extent luck were attributed for favorable out-

comes for women. Thus, the notion "if you are number two, you try harder." There is also theoretical background from sex role stereotyping to suggest that females will do poorly in masculine sex-typed tasks (Schein, 1973; O'Leary 1974; Bender 1979). Thus females in non-traditional roles, would be expected to do poorly in leading male subordinates. According to Rose (1978) such situations involve a masculine sex-typed occupation with cross-sex behaviors. In contrast, a male managing predominantly male followers would be expected to perform well because the role is masculine and requires no cross-sex behaviors. If in these two examples both male and female leaders demonstrate comparable performance, many people would be more surprised at the unexpected outcome for females than for males. This reasoning is supported by the findings of Bass Krusell & Alexander (1971). By classifying data in terms of leader's interaction with women (none, subordinate, peer, superior), they found that men who did not work for women had more positive regard for women than men who did work for women and the least favorable stereotypic attitudes toward working women were expressed by male leaders in superior positions to women. The relationship between sex-stereotyping in masculine sex-type tasks with cross sex interactions for leaders and followers is not well understood. How salient are those factors in determining leader performance, and if present how durable or lasting do these effects remain?

THE PRESENT STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess the generality of an interesting attitudinal phenomena described in a previous laboratory study of West Point cadets. Rice, Bender and Vitters (1980) found that male followers'

attitudes toward the role of women in society influenced the way these followers responded to male and female leaders.

The Rice et al. (1980) study showed that male followers holding traditional views toward women's roles in society made less favorable judgments about the causes of group and leader performance in groups led by females than in groups led by males. These followers indicated that the leader's hard work and the cooperation of followers played a less powerful role in groups with female leaders than in groups with male leaders. Also, these traditional followers attributed luck as being a stronger determinant of performance in groups with female leaders than in groups with male leaders.

Male followers with egalitarian attitudes toward the role of women showed just the opposite pattern of bias in their attributional judgments. These followers made more favorable attributions for female leaders than for male leaders (e.g., regarding the extent to which group or leader performance was determined by the leader's hard work or follower cooperation). Regarding the less flattering factor of luck, egalitarian followers said that this was a stronger factor in male-led groups than in female-led groups.

This leadership study provided the data necessary to test the generality of the previously reported bias related to the sex role attitudes of followers. Several important similarities and differences between the previous and present study give special meaning to such a test.

- Both the studies were conducted with cadets at the U.S. Military Academy.

- Both studies used the same format for assessing attributional judgments regarding the causes of unit performance.
- The previous study was conducted in the artificial context of a two-hour laboratory simulation while the present data was collected in the real-life context of a seven-week military training environment (Cadet Basic Training, CBT, and Cadet Field Training, CFT).
- The previous study had only male followers while the present study had both male and female cadets in follower roles.
- The previous study used the Spence and Helmreich (1972) Attitudes toward Women Scale, AWS, to assess beliefs regarding the role that women should play in society at large. The present study used the Army Research Institute Attitudes toward Women in the Military Scale (ARIAWS). The ARIAWS is more limited and specific in content than the AWS in that the ARIAWS considers the role of women in only one of society's institutions: the military. Priest (1979) reports a correlation of .59 between ARIAWS and AWS.
- The previous study reported the bias of sex role attitudes only for attributional judgments. The present study explored for such bias in both attributional judgments and follower evaluations of leader success in terms of five criteria: leader effectiveness, unit effectiveness, follower satisfaction with leader, follower satisfaction with peers, and follower's satisfaction with assignment.

In light of both the results reported by Rice, Bender and Vitters (1980) and the construct proposed to be measured by the ARIAWS, we offered the following hypothesis concerning the reactions of persons with traditional

attitudes toward the role of women in the military.

Hypothesis 1: Followers with traditional attitudes toward the role of women in the military respond to male leaders more favorably than to female leaders (both in terms of attributional judgments and direct assessments of leader success).

It is less clear what to expect from followers holding egalitarian attitudes toward the role of women and men in the military. As these individuals feel men and women should play an equally strong role in the military, we might expect them to show no difference in the way they respond to male and female leaders. However, in the laboratory study, bias was found favoring female leaders in the responses of followers with egalitarian attitudes. Thus, we have some justification for each of the following alternative hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2: Followers with egalitarian attitudes toward the role of women in the military show one of two patterns:

2a) They respond to female leaders more favorably than to male leaders (both in terms of attributional judgments and direct assessment of leader success);

2b) They respond no differently to male and female leaders (both in terms of attributional judgments and direct assessment of leader success).

METHOD

Subjects

Cadets at the U.S. Military Academy in leader and trainee roles at Cadet Field Training (CFT) and CBT are the subjects of concern for this particular report of the 1979 Summer Leadership Study. At CBT, we have usable ARIAWS and post-training responses from 692 males and 86 females; 741 cadets described a male squad leader and 67 described a female squad leader. At CFT 766 males and 75 females provided usable responses to the questionnaire; 726 described a male administrative training detail platoon lieutenant and 115 described a female.

Measures

ARIAWS. During the new cadet orientation period in June 1979, freshman cadets in the graduating Class of 1983 completed the Army Research Institute Attitudes toward Women in the Military Scale (ARIAWS). Scores used for Sophomore cadets in the graduating Class of 1982 were those taking this scale in August 1978. This seven item scale was developed by Woelfel, Savell, Collins, & Bentler (1976). The scale assesses reactions to the role of females in the Army, with high scores reflecting egalitarian attitudes (i.e., equal roles for male and female Army personnel) and low scores as reflecting traditional attitudes (i.e., dangerous and combat roles reserved for males).

Because the seven items have different numbers of response alternatives and different standard deviations, we standardized each item on a z score scale before combining them into a composite scale score. This procedure adjusts for the problem of those items with the larger standard deviations

receiving greater weight in a simple sum of raw scores.

To assess the reliability of the scale created by the sum of the seven standardized item scores, the alpha coefficient of internal consistency was calculated (Cronbach, 1951). The alpha values were .79 for respondents at CBT (Class of 1983), and .74 for respondents at CFT (Class of 1982). For purposes of the present research, this level of reliability was adequate.

Post-training questionnaire. During re-organization week in August 1979, cadets in the Class of 1982 completed a questionnaire in which they described their administrative platoon leader during CFT. In October 1979, cadets from the Class of 1983 completed the same questionnaire (with a few additional items); these cadets described the leader-follower relationship that existed between themselves and their CBT squad leader.

This study is concerned with those parts of the post-training questionnaire reflecting the success of the unit leader and attributional judgments about the cause of unit performance. Following the suggestion of Korman (1971), we used two major classes of criterion variables reflecting leadership success: subordinate satisfaction and performance effectiveness. In all, we had the five following measures as criteria of leader success: subordinates perceptions of leader effectiveness, unit effectiveness, satisfaction with own job, satisfaction with peers, and satisfaction with unit.

Six items were used to assess attributional judgments. The respondents indicated the extent to which each factor contributed to the performance of the unit. The factors were selected to include factors internal to the leader (leadership skill and the leader's hard work), factors internal to the followers (unit members' skill and unit members' hard work), and

factors external to both (good luck and bad luck).

RESULTS

Analyses of Variance

Eight separate 2 x 2 multivariate analyses of variance were conducted with the SPSS MANOVA program (Cohen & Buens, 1978). For each of these analyses, the independent variables were Leader Gender (male-female) and Follower ARIAWS (traditional-egalitarian). For one-half of these analyses, the six attribution items were the dependent variables and for the other half, the five leader success scores were the dependent variables. Separate analyses were conducted for male and female followers. The responses from cadets at CBT and from cadets at CFT were also analyzed separately. The results of these eight MANOVAs are summarized in Table 1. The results of the univariate analyses of variance corresponding to the MANOVAs are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Interactions. As shown in Table 1, none of the predicted multivariate Leader Gender x Follower ARIAWS interactions were significant. Thus, the gender-based attributional bias reported by Rice, Bender and Vitters (1980) cannot be generalized to the measures and data collection sites of the present research. Also, we found no such interactions in the multivariate analyses of the five measures of leader success. Thus, with the ARIAWS measure of sex role attitudes and cadet leaders in training environments, egalitarian followers and traditional followers do not make different

attributional or evaluative judgments regarding male and female leaders. These findings failed to support either Hypothesis 1 or Hypothesis 2a.

There are some scattered interaction effects in the univariate analyses that are significant or marginally significant. In light of the failure to find any significant multivariate interactions, it is not wise to try to interpret such results. However, for further reference, the appropriate F ratios corresponding to these univariate analyses are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Insert Table 2 & 3 About Here

Leader Gender main effects. The significant multivariate effect for Leader Gender among male followers at CFT is reflected in three univariate effects that are significant or approach conventional levels of significance. The followers were more satisfied with their peers and their summer assignment (and rated their unit as being more effective) when led by a male than when led by a female. For female followers, the gender of the leader had no statistically significant impact on their post-training questionnaire responses reflecting the success of the leader. These data are enlightening concerning how male and female followers react to male and female leaders. These data suggest that only the males at CFT are sufficiently affected by Leader Gender to yield significant effects.

Follower ARIAWS main effects. As shown in Table 2, the multivariate main effect for Follower ARIAWS was significant for the attribution responses of males at CBT. The univariate ANOVAS yielded significant or marginally significant main effects of this type for three items: leader

work, good luck, and bad luck. Traditional male followers, relative to their egalitarian counterparts, made stronger attributional judgments on all three items, i.e., traditional cadets rated each of these three factors as contributing more strongly to unit performance than did egalitarian cadets.

Discussion

Based on the results presented above, it appears that attitudes towards the role of women in the Army as measured by the ARIAWS does not introduce a consistent and strong bias into the way male and female leaders are judged by their subordinates. The multivariate analyses, which control for the inflated alpha level resulting from conducting many statistical tests, did not yield significant effect of the type predicted. However, in the evaluations of leader success we did find patterns suggesting gender-based bias. The attributional judgments showed no such effects on any of these multivariate analyses.

These results suggest two major conclusions. Either the ARIAWS scores are irrelevant to the type of judgments assessed in this study, or the cadets were generally able to repress their attitudes in their effort to judge their unit leaders in an objective fashion. The former interpretation reflects negatively on the construct validity of the ARIAWS scale while the latter interpretation reflects positively on the integration of women to West Point.

Assuming that the ARIAWS is a valid measure, the absence of consistent gender-based bias suggests that the elements of the West Point environment we have studied are quite healthy with regard to the issue of sexism.

Apparently those cadets with reservations about the appropriateness and/or value of women in the Army can overcome these attitudes when judging a particular female in a supervisory role. Perhaps, it is only those cadets with extremely high or extremely low ARIAWS scores that show any tendency toward bias. Most likely the general absence of strong bias in these data reflects both the institutional encouragement of gender fairness and the preparation of the female leaders. The Academy has been sensitized to the issue of gender bias through numerous reports, workshops, and specific incidents. More importantly, it has taken many affirmative steps to handle such problems (see the annual Project Athena reports for reviews of such actions). As reflected in the present data, these actions have had a positive effect insofar as follower judgments of male and female leaders are concerned. Regarding the preparedness of the female leaders, the policy of equality of training for male and female cadets may be crucial. Males and females have gone through similar training experiences; it is not surprising that they should be judged quite comparable by their followers given this equality of background.

As noted in the introduction, there are many potentially important points of difference between the present study and these earlier studies. With the available evidence, it is impossible to determine which of these points of difference is responsible for the different pattern of results regarding gender-based bias in attributions reported in the various studies. However, there is at least some speculation to suggest that the research setting (field vs. laboratory) may, at least in part, be responsible for such differences. In discussing results of field and laboratory studies of gender and leadership, Osborn and Vickers (1976) concluded,

"...artificial, short term laboratory situations tend to elicit subject responses based on readily available stereotypes, while long-term, real-life, field settings include extensive interpersonal contact that provides subjects with a more realistic basis for their behavior. Thus, lab studies may yield deceptive data in overstating the total influence of sex stereotyping" (p. 447).

Both the laboratory study by Rice et al. (1980), and the Garland and Price (1977) study involving subject responses to written descriptions of female leaders, are characterized by short-term and possibly artificial interaction. And both of these studies yielded the gender-based bias in attributional judgments. The present study may have failed to demonstrate such bias because the interaction patterns were more long term and realistic, thereby providing respondents with information allowing them to move beyond sex role stereotypes in their responses. Such factors may influence both judgments of leader success and attributional judgments. This more temporal bias could disappear over time as strong institutional supports are developed to enhance the success of women and as the pioneering women prove themselves dispelling stereotypic biases regarding their performance in masculine sex-task roles. Two other studies reported elsewhere (Adams 1980, and Adams, Priest, Rice & Prince 1980) add evidence to this position. It may be valuable to direct greater attention to the hypothesis offered by Osborn & Vickers (1976). Clearly more research is needed.

Table 1

Summary of MANOVA Results (F and df)

Class Year, and Training Site	Gender of Followers	Dependent Variables	Leader Gender (A)	Follower ARIAWS (B)	A x B
1983 CBT	Male	Attributions	1.00 (6,387)	3.52** (6,387)	.41 (6,387)
1983 CBT	Female	Attributions	—[a]	—[a]	—[a]
1982 CFT	Male	Attributions	.78 (6,473)	.96 (6,473)	1.64 (6,473)
1982 CFT	Female	Attributions	1.14 (6,41)	.76 (6,41)	.31 (6,41)
1983 CBT	Male	Success	.67 (5,626)	.61 (5,626)	.83 (5,626)
1983 CBT	Female	Success	1.15 (5,68)	1.48 (5,68)	.26 (5,68)
1982 CFT	Male	Success	3.94** (5,635)	.97 (5,635)	1.22 (5,635)
1982 CFT	Female	Success	1.05 (5,62)	1.51 (5,62)	.80 (5,62)

[a]There were no egalitarian female followers with female leaders responding to all the attribution items, therefore this analysis could not be conducted.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Table 2

F Ratios of Univariate ANOVAs for Male Followers.

Effect:	Leader Gender (A)		Follower ARIAWS (B)		A x B	
Dependent Variable — Training Site:	CBT[c]	CFT[a]	CBT[c]	CFT[a]	CBT[c]	CFT[a]
Attributions:						
Leader skill	.01	.04	.29	.52	.07	.00
Unit skill	2.17	1.00	1.93	1.17	.82	1.31
Leader work	.02	.77	3.83*	3.71#	.22	.31
Unit work	2.52	.13	.90	1.01	.03	.53
Good luck	2.04	2.95#	3.98*	.53	.23	.70
Bad luck	.19	.69	9.43**	.03	.31	5.72*
	CBT[d]	CFT[b]	CBT[d]	CFT[b]	CBT[d]	CFT[b]
Success:						
Assignment satisfaction	.12	8.19**	.41	.05	.01	.54
Peer satisfaction	.00	11.79***	.12	2.56	.06	2.40
Leader satisfaction	.49	.44	.47	1.00	.60	.59
Leader effectiveness	.51	.69	.04	1.64	3.22#	1.18
Unit effectiveness	.61	2.44	1.15	.18	.01	.30

Note: Attribution items are reverse scored.

#p<.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

[a]df = 1,478 [b]df = 1,639 [c]df = 1,392 [d]df = 1,630

Table 3

F Ratios of Univariate ANOVAs for Female Followers.

Effect:	Leader Gender (A)		Follower ARIAWS (B)		A x B	
Dependent Variable — Training Site:	CBT[d]	CFT[b]	CBT[d]	CFT[b]	CBT[d]	CFT[b]
Attributions:						
Leader skill	—	.03	—	1.24	—	.00
Unit skill	—	4.88*	—	.06	—	.01
Leader work	—	.01	—	.09	—	.02
Unit work	—	.00	—	.17	—	.80
Good luck	—	.01	—	1.18	—	.24
Bad luck	—	1.07	—	.33	—	.08
	CBT[c]	CFT[a]	CBT[c]	CFT[a]	CBT[c]	CFT[a]
Success:						
Assignment satisfaction	1.63	.10	6.56	1.21	.02	.06
Peer satisfaction	.33	1.18	.10	.71	.05	.12
Leader satisfaction	3.96*	.33	.42	1.27	.92	.00
Leader effectiveness	.07	1.06	.73	1.34	.15	.58
Unit effectiveness	.01	.40	.00	.02	.37	2.74

Note: Attribution items are reverse scored.

*$p < .05$

[a]df = 1,66 [b]df = 1,46 [c]df = 1,72

[d]There were no egalitarian female followers with female leaders responding to all the attribution items, therefore this analysis could not be conducted as part of the MANOVA program.

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